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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ADDIS ABABA 000078

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF, AF/E, AND S/CRS
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER
CJTF-HOA FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/10/2017

TAGS: PREL EAID KPKO MOPS ET SO ER KE

SUBJECT: PM MELES AND TFG PRESIDENT YUSUF DISCUSS NEXT STEPS IN SOMALIA

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 40

1B. ADDIS ABABA 72 (NOTAL)

Classified By: DCM JANET WILGUS. REASONS: 1.4 (A), (B), AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY. Prime Minister Meles stressed to Ambassador and DCM Jan. 9 that this was the best time for stabilizing and creating a new order in Somalia without warlords and extremists. He said the Somali clan system and Somalia practices must be respected and not circumvented in order to ensure success. In this context, Ethiopia has pushed TFG President Yusuf to engage and bring into the government Hawiye and other clan elders, integrate clan militias into a unified army, meet humanitarian needs with high visibility and high impact projects, and establish a functioning government. Ethiopian troops are pursuing elements of the CIC near Ras Kamboni, but to ensure security, Yusuf and the TFG must ultimately establish itself as a responsive and functioning government engaging and earning the support of the other clans. Meles noted that press reports of an alleged U.S. strike in Somalia may create diplomatic problems for the United States, but so long as terrorist targets are hit and the United States is seen as addressing Somalia's humanitarian needs, the United States will make a positive impact and receive support from the Somali people. Meles urged the USG to be visible through humanitarian aid. He suggested that a ship off-loading USAID wheat would go a long way to earn the support of the Somali people. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) On January 9, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi briefed Ambassador and DCM on his recent meeting in Addis Ababa with Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG) President Abdullahi Yusuf. According to Meles, Yusuf underscored the need for inclusive dialogue "from the bottom up," involving all clans and moving as quickly as possible. Yusuf had noted the need to establish administrative structures within the next week or two, particularly a police force for Mogadishu and Kismayo. Appointing a governor for Mogadishu ("the toughest nut to crack"), who was approved by all clans, was another priority. Within two weeks, business leaders, traditional elders, and others needed to work together to establish provincial-level government structures and appoint local officials, such as a governor and police commissioner. A national reconciliation conference would then follow, involving representatives from all provinces as well as from the diaspora, to put national structures into place, building

on the Transitional Federal Charter. The conference could potentially review clan representation in parliament and make necessary adjustments.

¶13. (C) Meles said he had emphasized to Yusuf that political dialogue was key. The framework was set for an inter-Somali dialogue, Meles said, but would succeed only when conducted by Somalis themselves, as in Somaliland and Puntland.

Somalis alone best understood clan dynamics and the clan basis for some key positions (e.g., director of Mogadishu port) and needed to resolve these issues with no outside input. While Ethiopia wanted to ensure that participants were representative, the content of the dialogue was up to the Somalis themselves, Meles said.

SECURITY SECTOR REFORM NEEDED TO NEUTRALIZE MILITIA

¶14. (C) According to Meles, Yusuf had stated that while international peacekeepers were needed to bolster fledgling Somali national forces, an outside peacekeeping force could not keep peace in Somalia; only the Somalis themselves could do this. Yusuf had further stated that disarmament should be conducted by clan leaders, not by the government, in conjunction with the reconciliation process. Yusuf had said that to neutralize the warlords, militia needed to be integrated into the national army as soon as possible, and then paid (which required funding). This would allow Ethiopia to reduce its visible footprint within Somalia (while still providing training and intelligence support), which, in turn, would reduce tension within the country. Additional recruiting when provincial conferences occurred could help establish a national military of about 10,000.

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Police forces should also be established. Ethiopia would assist in regularizing these forces, reorganizing Somalia's military as it grew, Meles said.

¶15. (S) In addition to reorganizing police and military forces, Yusuf had also called for intelligence and security cooperation. Meles said Ethiopia planned to embed personnel in Somali units, to train and equip Somali intelligence and assist with operations. It was essential to conduct clandestine operations against the jihadists, to prevent them from reorganizing within Somalia, Meles added.

MELES RECOMMENDS VISIBLE U.S. HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

¶16. (C) Meles said he had advised Yusuf to dispatch diplomatic missions to highlight Somalia's needs and to solicit funds and equipment from donors, particularly Arab states. Meles considered the World Bank a possible source of funds for post-conflict reconstruction, but also urged the United States and the EU to provide funding.

¶17. (C) Meles recommended to Ambassador that the USG arrange for a ship to deliver clearly marked "U.S. wheat" to Mogadishu, to be off-loaded and distributed by Somalis. Meles also recommended that the USG deliver medical supplies. High visibility, high impact projects, such as road improvements, were needed, he added.

ENDORSEMENT OF U.S. MILITARY

¶18. (C) Citing an overlap of Ethiopian national interests in Somalia, and U.S. interests in the region, Meles told Ambassador that he was satisfied with cooperation with the United States. Meles urged the U.S. military, however, to keep its footprint "slight," so as not to play into the hands of jihadists who wish to portray action in Somalia as a

crusade against Islam. Meles said he was not concerned about press reports regarding U.S. action in Somalia, so long as terrorist targets were hit.

¶19. (C) Meles told Ambassador that cooperation with Kenya was "broadly adequate" at the highest levels, but that continued pressure was needed to ensure that mid- and lower-level officials did more than pursue their own "vested interests." Kenyan authorities required adequate, independent information (e.g., on high-value targets who had fled to Kenya) in order to ensure their continued cooperation, Meles said.

NGO REPORTS

¶10. (C) In response to Ambassador's discussion of humanitarian concerns (WFP access to aviation fuel in Kismayo, and the alleged torture and killing of a UN worker, as reported by email from Nairobi USAID/EA/FFP office), PM Meles acknowledged difficulties in obtaining aviation fuel, due to transportation and cost issues. Meles said he would look into the alleged killing of the civilian, but noted that all troops had been issued clear guidelines not to torture or kill unarmed civilians, prisoners, or non-combatants. Meles opined that some opponents sought to promote insurgency in Somalia, as in Iraq, and were thus looking for any possible sign of larger problems. False rumors needed to be adequately addressed, the PM said.

ERITREA "NOT YET READY FOR FULL-SCALE WAR"

¶11. (C) Asked about Eritrean violations of the Temporary Security Zone along Ethiopia's northern border, Meles replied that Eritrea was "not yet ready for full-scale war" but would continue to "indirectly" destabilize the region. Meles said Ethiopia's strategy was to deter Eritrean aggression by indirectly highlighting that Eritrea could not prevail in a

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war with Ethiopia (i.e., through Ethiopia's military success in Somalia, or acquisition of new military equipment). Meles recommended targeting Eritrean financial interests as a means of pressuring Eritrean President Isaias.

¶12. (C) Meles reiterated his January 4 request to AF A/S Frazer (ref A) for 3,000-4,000 tons of Title I food assistance for Ethiopia's urban poor (ref B).

¶13. (C) COMMENT: Meles has highlighted the need for Ethiopian forces to withdraw as soon as possible from Somalia, citing not only the heavy economic burden of their continued deployment, but also concern about their being targeted by terrorism (reftel). His discussions with Yusuf on the need to foster an inclusive inter-Somali dialogue, and to disarm warlords by integrating militia into national security structures, highlight that Meles recognizes that, in addition to the deployment of a neutral deterrent force, the TFG must make progress toward establishing a political foundation for Somalia's long-term stability, before Ethiopia can execute its exit strategy. END COMMENT.
YAMAMOTO